

ON ARCHITECTURAL COMPETITION.

"If the history of competitions were written, its details would show an extent of rivalry, astounding."—*The Architect*, vol. ix. p. 52.

SIR,—As almost all complaints on the subject of competitions which reach the public seem to derive their publicity from your pages, and as there appeared in the issue of last week a promise to publish particulars of future malpractices as they may come to your knowledge, I send a few extracts from a correspondence in which I have been lately engaged, from which you will be able to judge of the to me, apparent injustice pursued on a very recent occasion. I do not give you the names of the parties, as the correspondence was certainly on one side never intended for publication; but you will be satisfied with the recognition of the hand which pens this letter.

The secretary of a committee for obtaining competition designs for a new church, which was to be built for 4,000*l.*, with aid from the building societies, returned to me a set of drawings with the following note:—

"SIR,—I have this day returned your plans by rail, ear, paid, and hope they will reach you in safety. They were much liked, but not chosen.—I am, &c."

In answer to a request to know who was successful, the reply was dated November 4, 1844, and commenced:—"SIR,—I did not know that it was customary to give the information you require," adding the name of the parties. I then myself veiled at what appeared to me rudeness as well as ignorance; and, in consequence of rumours as to an injudicious decision, I wrote twice, giving those reports at full length. To my first a decidedly evasive answer came; and to the second the chief part of the reply was this:—

"December 2, 1844.

"You write that you would be obliged for an explicit answer to your last letter, which you would had one to infer was this:—In short, I beg you to do me the justice to see (for whether the committee has decided properly is not a matter to be decided upon even by your powerful assurance of the wish of the members to do right) if the premium is or will be paid to Mr. — or Mr. —, as I understand one of those names is attached to the successful design; and if that design without alteration holds 1,000 people conveniently on the ground-floor without seats in the chancel, which the building societies will not allow; and whether that design, without alteration, can be executed for 4,000*l.* in the judgment of practical men (I do not mean the authors of it, and none but practical men can judge). These questions will be easily answered by 'yes' or 'no.' Where in your letter of the 11th of November are these or any such questions asked? You must allow me to say there is something here I cannot understand, and my safest plan is to inform you that the committee having advertised for plans under certain conditions, *well*, I have no doubt, adhere to them.—Yours obediently, &c."

"P.S. I hope this correspondence may now cease."

That is, Sir, that one month after the return of my design, and also after stating the name of the successful competitor, I am told, after pressing for a denial of the reports descriptive of the successful design, the committee will probably decide according to the condition.

I believe that there is no means of investigating the case, or I should feel inclined to learn with certainty what has been done.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant, J. W. P.

[Our correspondent refers to the competition plans for St. Thomas's New Church, Winchester, concerning which, letters are printed at p. 557 and p. 564, vol. ii. We are informed that it is not clear even at this time which of the two gentlemen is the successful candidate.—Ed.]

SHEFFIELD'S BURIAL-GROUND.

SIR,—Seeing in your paper of last week an article under the head of "Burial-ground Nuisance," containing an account of infamous practices taking place in this ground, the whole of which is grossly false, and as proceedings are about to be commenced against the author, I hope you will, in justice, find a corner in your next *BUILDER* for this communication.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Feb. 12, 1845. A. BIRD, Manager.

MR. COCKERELL'S LECTURES.

SIR,—I am quite astonished to learn that Professor Cockerell should have recommended, *ex cathedra*, the not particularly artist-like practice of literal and wholesale copying, *alias* piracy, from books of designs. If such doctrine is to prevail, adieu to architectural design altogether; we have only to follow the patterns which are ready prepared for us, and that, as is proved, by the professor himself, a builder is capable of doing just as well as an architect. I am tempted to fancy that the professor spoke somewhat ironically of the "exceedingly fine portfolio" produced by the builder, and intended his remarks to be interpreted *en grimo salis*: I remain, Sir, yours, &c.

AN ARCHITECT.

WHEN TWO BUILDERS, WHICH IS TO GIVE NOTICE?

SIR,—I have some alterations to make to a house, which my client wishes to be done by two different persons, one to carry out the bricklayer's, and the other the carpenter and joiner's works. Now the new Building Act expresses that the builder is to give two days' notice to the surveyor before alterations are commenced; but as there are to be two separate tradesmen employed, upon whom does the duty devolve? By answering this question, you will greatly oblige your constant reader and admirer,

WILLIAM FREEMAN.

Paddington, Feb. 10, 1845.

[The Act provides that notice shall be given by "the master-builder, or other person employed to execute any work; or if there be no master-builder, or other person so employed, then the owner of the building, or other person for whom, or by whose order such work is to be done." If there be two master-builders, he who begins first should give notice, for which and other reasons we point to the bricklayer.—Ed.]

MISCELLANEA.

INCREASE IN LIFE ASSURANCE.—The reports read at the meetings of the several assurance associations held within the last few weeks make known the fact that during the past year there has been a great extension in the number of persons who have secured for their families the provision which the system of life assurance is designed to afford. It has been an anomaly in the action of society, that a people so sensibly impressed as Englishmen peculiarly are by a desire to provide for their families, and yet, at the same time, strongly influenced by the pride of present circumstances, should have hitherto been so indifferent to the means furnished by the principle of life assurance, for overcoming the apparent insuperable difficulty of securing a large future benefit without any material present sacrifice. We are glad to find this indifference no longer exists; and that, under the exposition of the benefits of life assurance, promulgated by various officers, and the collateral aid of the press, the subject is becoming well understood and extensively acted upon. At a recent general meeting of members of the Scottish Provident Institution, held at the Star Hotel, it was remarked, however, that of eight or nine offices which had arisen within the last few months, only one appeared to be constituted with exclusive reference to the interests of the assured, namely the British Mutual Life Assurance Society of London, which was founded on the principle of mutual contribution, or of dividing the whole profits among the assured. The rates of premium were much lower than those charged by other mutual offices, and have been adopted for the use of the society from the Scottish Provident Institution, which has met with unexampled success.—*Post Magazine*.

THE IRON TRADE.—The make of iron in the United Kingdom at the present time is near 1,400,000 tons annually. Scotland furnishes almost one-third part of the supply—being 450,000 tons annually, or at the rate of 9,000 tons per week. But in the course of two months there will be nine new furnaces put in operation in this neighbourhood alone, and their combined yield may be calculated at 1,350 tons weekly, or 70,000 tons per annum.—*Glasgow Constitution*.

WESTMINSTER IMPROVEMENTS.—Yesterday week a large meeting of the inhabitants of Westminster was held at the Mechanics' Institution, Great Smith-street, for the purpose of considering the best plan for the improvement of the district. Amongst the gentlemen on the platform were Mr. B. Hawes, M.P.; the Hon. Captain Rous, M.P.; Mr. C. Hindley, M.P.; Colonel Short, Mr. Humphrey, Mr. R. Wason, Mr. C. Wood, &c. The Hon. Captain Rous, M.P., was unanimously voted to the chair, and he having briefly introduced the subject of the meeting, Mr. Wilson opposed the plan of Mr. Wason, because it would not remove many of the existing inconveniences, and he urged the necessity for the formation of some street to run from Westminster Abbey over the ground now occupied by Totbill-street, destroying the old and dilapidated courts and alleys in its way, and leading direct to Piccadilly. In conclusion, he read extracts from Parliamentary reports, to show the dreadful condition of the neighbourhood, as regarded drainage, ventilation, cleanliness, and health; and moved a resolution to the effect, that no part of the metropolis more urgently required improvement than the space between the House of Parliament and Buckingham Palace. Mr. Bignell moved, as an amendment, "that a committee be appointed to examine the various plans, and to draw the attention of the Metropolitan Improvement Commissioners and the legislature to that, which they considered the best." Mr. Hawes, M.P., said that before the committee could come to a determination the plan of Mr. Wason would be in execution. It would be advisable to pass a resolution to endeavour to suspend proceedings in Parliament until the best plan should be determined upon by the inhabitants of Westminster. The resolution proposed by Mr. Wilson was then carried, and also others, to the following effect:—"that a committee be appointed to consider the improvements suggested; and that they be directed to impress upon the Government the propriety of withholding any plan which is not approved of by the inhabitants generally." Mr. Hindley, M.P., moved "that in any line of streets formed attention be paid to the improvement of the dwellings of the poorer classes." This resolution having been carried, and the committee appointed, the meeting separated.

THE TOWER.—A few days since a deputation from the British Archaeological Association paid a visit of inspection to the Tower, where they were received by Major Ebrington, the deputy governor, Major Hall, Captain Vernon, and Mr. Stacey, who conducted the members over all parts of the building, without any reserve. The alterations now in progress have laid open several new sources of antiquarian interest, not the least of which are the architectural peculiarities of the celebrated Traitors' Gate, most of which have been previously unnoticed. The causes which led to the visit were the disposition shewn by the authorities to preserve all relics and monuments of interest which are not inconsistent with the necessary improvement, as was evinced by their reclaiming from the City the portion of the Old London wall, on Tower-hill, from the destruction to which it had been consigned by the corporation. The results of the inspection, when complete, will be made the subject of an official report to the authorities. Upwards of 300 coffins have been removed to the catacombs at the back of the church of St. Peter ad Vincula, which were previously interred in the burial-ground, and displaced in the excavations made for the foundations of the new barracks which are to be erected on the side of the old Small Armoury.—*Times*.

IMPROVED METHOD OF MAKING BRICKS: N. J. Wyeth, Cambridge, Massachusetts.—The object of this composition is, to produce bricks which will admit of driving nails into them, to avoid the necessity of introducing in walls what are known amongst mechanics as "wooden bricks." This composition consists of clay, mixed with either sawdust, charcoal, peat, or tan-bark, after it has been used by the tanner. The proportions may be varied, but the patentee recommends three parts of clay to five parts of either of the combustibles above mentioned.—*Claim*: "I do not claim mixing combustible materials with clay for making bricks, but I claim mixing them in such proportions as will produce bricks possessing the above-named properties."